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then he ordered that a leather handle be fixed to the outside of the shield, and Ibn Ali executed the commands of his master. And the shield was prepared and made ready though it presented its inside to an enemy. 539x

The day of the fight dawned, and the army of the Persians gathered on the east bank of the Tigris, and the Arabs of the great tribes came together on the west bank of the Tigris, and a great stand had been erected for the Shah of the Persians and his ladies and his court amongst the Persian troops. In the centre of the river was an island, to this island Maqdad came in a boat from the west bank, and Pahlewan came in a boat from the east bank, and they met on the island. And Maqdad saw that Pahlewan was armed with a great sword the length of which was the height of a man, and Pahlewan came towards Maqdad and his approach was that of a skilful fighter. And Maqdad retreated before Pahlewan, warding off his blows with his sword, and he kept his face to the sun, a position of disadvantage, and Pahlewan was pleased that Maqdad kept his face to the sun and he thought: They were fools who told me that this boy is a skilful fighter. He does not even try to manœuvre to get the sun behind him, and he wears his shield inside out. But at that very moment Maqdad turned his shield towards the face of Pahlewan, and the sun was shining full on the shield, and it was burnished like a mirror and it was concave in shape, for it was reversed, so it concentrated the rays of the sun and flung them fully into the eyes of Pahlewan, and he was forced to close his eyes. And Maqdad ran towards Pahlewan and attacked him, keeping the blinding rays on Pahlewan's eyes. Then Pahlewan struck out with his great sword, but he did not hit Maqdad, and Maqdad cut off Pahlewan's head with a single blow. √539x 726●

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And the onlookers were amazed, for they were far off and they did not see how the beardless boy had overcome Pahlewan, and the heart of the Shah of the Persians was full of anger and fear. Then Maqdad turned and shouted across the river to the Persian host, he raised his sword on high and cried: O mighty Shah of Persia, you I will not challenge, for your beard is grey, but you have a son, famous in battle. Send him to me that I may fight him. And the Shah made no reply to Maqdad, but he made a sign signifying that a reply would be sent later, so Maqdad returned to his boat and he crossed the river to the gathering of the tribes.

That night the Shah of Persia held council with his generals and commanders, and the prince his son was present, and a great general spoke and said: Master, it is fitting that the prince your son should fight with the Arab boy, lest the soldiers of our army say he is afraid of a beardless boy, and henceforward they will not follow him in battle, nor will they respect him. And the prince listened and there was fear in his heart. And the Shah ordered the commanders and generals to leave them, and he spoke to his son in this fashion: My son, this Arab boy may not be a great fighter. Perhaps it was luck or some trick of fate which delivered Pahlewan into his hands. It is fitting that you should go and fight him, that your name may be famous as a warrior, and that the soldiers shall fear you. For one day you will be Shah in my place, and if the soldiers and the people of the towns and the peasants do not fear the Shah, then they rise in rebellion and the kingdom is overthrown.

But the prince replied: Father, do not send me out to be slaughtered in the manner of a sheep. This boy is no fighter, he is a magician, and I am unskilled in magic and

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*539 O Majesty the Shah, after the most respectful salutations I write to inform you that I am engaged in praying for Your Majesty's health, and as for your son the Prince, let it be known to you that he is in good health and he is my guest, and he occupies his time in praying for Your Majesty's health. And it would be fitting if the request which I am now about to lay at Your Majesty's feet were made by one of my friends or relations but in the present condition of war courtesy must fall by the way. And my request is this, that you give me your daughter the Princess Jamila in marriage, and if you name a price, that price will be paid, and as for her dowry, let her bring a pomegranate seed. My name is a known name and my pedigree is a known pedigree, and it is desirable that you send the Princess in a boat, as, due to the state of war, I cannot come to you. And let the Prince your son be present at the celebration of the marriage, and after it is concluded, even the duty of hospitality shall not cause us to detain him further. So he will return to your camp in safety and in peace.

And Maqdad signed and sealed the letter and sent it to the Persian camp.

The Shah of the Persians opened the letter of Maqdad and read it, and his face became black with anger and rage and he bellowed a bellow and roared a roar and he sent for his generals and his ministers and he shouted: This son of a camel has captured my son and now he wants to *539 marry my daughter. And he ordered his generals to J216 prepare a plan for attacking the camp of the tribes and rescuing his son and killing Maqdad. But the generals looked grave and they said: Master, how can this be? It is true that our army is ten times the size of the force of these Arab tribesmen, but when we march against them

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they fade away as do the bats at the first rays of the morning sun. But they return when we least expect them and kill our men and drive off our animals and they are gone before our army is in battle array.

And one of the generals spoke and said: Master, might it not be political and diplomatic to give your daughter to this boy? For he is truly a great warrior and it were better that he be our friend than our enemy, and as for his pedigree, it is as he says, for in no royal house can you find a pedigree which equals that of the simplest Arab tribesman. But the Shah said: This cannot and shall not be. Either you, my commanders, evolve a plan to secure the release of my son or I will have you roped between horses and torn apart. And meanwhile I will marry my daughter to a prince of Turkey, that no man who calls a host his father, no product of love in a ditch, shall come to me and insult me by asking for her in marriage. Send now for my daughter that I inform her of my decision.

A page went from the tent of the Shah to the women's quarter, and he spoke to the eunuch on guard and said: Tell the Princess Jamila that the Shah her father commands her presence, for he is arranging her marriage to a prince of Turkey. And the eunuch delivered the message to the Prince, who was dressed as the Princess Jamila, and he said: Mistress, your father commands your presence, for he is arranging your marriage to a prince of Turkey. And the face of the Prince went pale with fear, for he thought: Now what will happen when the Turkish prince comes in to me on the night of the wedding? And he could see no escape from his misfortune.

So the Prince, wearing the veil and dress of a lady, went into the presence of his father the Shah. And the Shah spoke and said: Beloved daughter, your interest touches